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# S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE,

M. P. FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

ON THE

WAR AND THE NEGOTIATIONS,

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*On the 3rd of August, 1855.*

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REVISED AND CORRECTED BY HIMSELF.

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*Price Threepence.*





# SPEECH

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Mr. SPEAKER,

It appears to me, Sir, that the motion which you have put from the chair, and which may be regarded as the immediate subject of debate, is a matter of small account. So far as regards that motion, I entirely agree with the right honourable gentleman (Sir G. Grey) who has just sat down, and who illustrated and enforced his opinion at some length, that the granting of these papers is a matter for the judgment of her Majesty's Government, and that the honourable member who has raised this debate would act unwisely if he attempted to force the Government, should they in the exercise of their discretion decline to produce them. Waving, therefore, all reference to that motion, I come to the speech of my right honourable friend; and again, with regard to that speech, I must distinguish the opinions and views of my right honourable friend from the statement of facts and circumstances which he gave us in relation to the late negotiations.

As respects the opinions of my right honourable friend, they appear to me to be moderation itself. Passing beyond the mere generalities in which perhaps we are all too apt to indulge—protesting, on the one hand, that we are deeply sensible of the evils of war, and, on the other hand, that we will not stoop to buy peace with dishonour—passing over these vague generalities, which are bandied to and fro without any sort of profit between persons ranged on different sides of this question, my right honourable friend has told the House, if I understood him rightly, that limitation itself—the limitation of the Russian forces in the Black Sea—was not to be regarded absolutely as a *sine quâ non* of peace in negotiations which may hereafter arise. My right honourable friend has made that, which I think an important communication, considering the character of the person from whom it comes, and from what high station it is uttered. Moreover, while he has told us that limitation of the Russian fleet is not to stand before the world in the character of an absolute condition of peace, he has told us of no other absolute condition of peace which is to come into its place. The effect of his speech, therefore, as far as it goes, is to restrict the scope of the objects and terms for which the Government is contending; for he appears to have withdrawn from the catalogue one of the objects on which, at a certain stage, so much has turned, and with such fatal consequence, and to have inserted nothing in its place. But then, it appears to me, that the right honourable gentleman, with all the moderation of his views and opinions, has only made more glaring the false position in which he stands; for what are the Government about? They are prolonging a war which costs the allies in money not less than one hundred millions per annum, together with a loss of life which will, I think, not be very greatly overstated at 1000 a day for all the parties to the war taken together. To justify the prolongation of such a war, in defiance of

the weight, as I think, of reason—but at any rate, and beyond all dispute, of authority, which is marshalled against it—requires, I think, stronger opinions than my right honourable friend has expressed, and larger and wider objects than his. Indeed, while we are called upon to make efforts so gigantic, and sacrifices so tremendous, I have the utmost difficulty in conceiving what image of an end is in his mind, and what he proposes to himself as an adequate purpose of the war, to give warrant to the extraordinary steps that we have taken, and to the extreme courses in which we are engaged.

And now, with respect to the statement of facts made by my right honourable friend. Here I am at issue with him on every point. If my honourable friend, the member for Wick, wanted any justification for raising this discussion, he would, I think, find it in the confused and perplexed state in which the narrative of these events yet stands before this House and the world; for well may they find it impenetrably obscure, when I can undertake to show that the speech of a man in the position, and with all the knowledge, ability, and integrity of my right honourable friend, presents a distorted view of those facts, and does not at all raise the issues upon which this House will have definitively, and I trust before any very long time, to judge. If we were to take our views from the speech of the right honourable gentleman, those who have listened to it might believe that the whole case before us turned upon the difference between the two projects of counterpoise and limitation; but I will show that it is no such thing. And, again, it might be supposed, from the speech of my right honourable friend, that there had not been proposed to us, or not proposed to us in due time, by Austria any set of terms on the rejection of which by Russia she would go to war. And this I understood to be a capital point in my right honourable friend's speech. I think he thus represented to us the case, that when a proposal was made at the end of April, it was rejected by the allies; and it consequently gave to Austria no opportunity of going to war to enforce it; and that when the proposal of limitation was made in June, Austria declared, as he states, that she would not go to war for the sake of that proposal, if Russia should reject it.

Now, Sir, I shall have to contest the general representation of the facts as they have been stated by my right honourable friend; but before I go to the consideration of those facts, I must say how deeply I feel that an accumulated and peculiar responsibility in this matter must rest upon the head of her Majesty's Government. It is not purely the responsibility, although, God knows, that it is great enough, of having chosen the alternative of war, and rejected the alternative of peace; for I will admit there would have been, under the present circumstances, an equal responsibility in making an opposite choice; but it is the position they have assumed, and the proportionate share they have had in bringing about this result, which has made them, and us through them, the principals, and all other parties only in a manner secondary and accessory, in the prolongation of the present war.

My noble friend, the member for the City of London (Lord J. Russell), who was also the Plenipotentiary of Great Britain in the Conferences at Vienna on the 18th of April, transmitted a proposal of Austria, which was approved of by my noble friend, not, perhaps, upon its abstract merits, but rather, I apprehend, with reference to the circumstances of the case, and the whole interests involved in the decision. That proposal was also



approved by the Plenipotentiary of France. It was, moreover, approved, or at the very least favourably received, if not formally and definitively approved, by the Plenipotentiary of Turkey; and, in the last place, it was of course entirely approved by the Plenipotentiary of Austria. This proposal was sent home by the noble lord, who was the organ of the Government, and not only the organ of the Government, but a member of the Government; who, moreover, as the organ of the Government, was entitled to something more than the ordinary consideration of a plenipotentiary, from his high station, from his distinguished abilities and career, and especially from the fact that he had been all along cognizant of the views of the Administration, and had shared its counsels at every stage of this difficult and momentous question. That noble lord made in writing a formal request that the consideration of this proposal should, if it were not accepted, at any rate be reserved until after he came home. Well, what was the course taken by the Cabinet upon the receipt of that request? My noble friend's despatch was written on the 18th of April; it was received on the 21st; and on that same 21st goes forth from the Foreign Office a despatch of great ability and detail, written by Lord Clarendon, expressing the surprise and regret with which he had received, through Count Colloredo, from Count Buol that very same proposal, and condemning it without reserve, from the first line to the last. By such an act as that, it must be admitted, the Cabinet have incurred a heavy and peculiar responsibility.

But my noble friend came home. I am not sure of the precise date of his arrival; but when he came home, not daunted by what had occurred—if, indeed, he were at this time so much as cognizant of it—he made his proposal to the Cabinet of which he was a member. My noble friend, in his speech in this House on the 16th of July, appeared to be restrained by imperious considerations from explaining the nature of the transactions that occurred during a particular and most eventful week, which my noble friend defined chronologically, if I remember right, as the week which began on the 30th of April, and ended on the 5th of May. We were only given to understand, that circumstances occurred during the course of that week, which influenced the British Government in the rejection of that proposal of the Austrian Government. For myself, as I can do no more than echo the popular construction of certain oracular phrases that have been used, and state what the public out of doors understood by these mysterious circumstances, there can be no reason why I should use reserve in the matter. The public understood that it was already the decision of the French Government to reject the Austrian proposal; that that decision formed a new fact in the case, and had either wholly or in great part led to its corresponding rejection by the Cabinet of Great Britain. But, Sir, I am bound to say, that in my belief it was not to the French Government, but to ourselves, that the responsibility of that rejection is mainly and substantially due. There are signs and tokens, that are not to be mistaken, in proof of this opinion of mine; because there was published in a Belgian newspaper an account of the resignation of M. Drouyn de Lhuys, which reappeared in Paris in the columns of the *Moniteur*—a journal of which the contents are understood to have, in the strictest sense, an official authority; so that it is not too much to say that the direct sanction of the Government was, by that publication, given to the statements in that letter.

And does that letter bear out the belief entertained by many, that we rejected the proposal of my noble friend because the French Government had already decided upon its rejection? Why, what did the Government of France, through its own official organ, say—and, as I think, say wisely—on this subject? These are the words of the statement in the *Moniteur* (I am obliged to cite them in English, as they were rendered in English journals, for I have not seen the original French):—

“It is certain that the English Government decided on rejecting it (the Austrian proposal). The Emperor, therefore, had the same motives for refusing it; that is to say, that it did not offer such a peace as would give sufficient guarantees to the Powers which had made so many sacrifices to defend and secure European right. His Majesty had, moreover, a desire to maintain in all its integrity and force the alliance with England; and the feeling of that Government on the question being already known had, beyond any doubt, a certain weight with him.”

Therefore, upon the authority of the French Government, it is published to the world—and, if it be a merit, let the Cabinet have the full credit of it, for it is an answer to the charges made by the right honourable gentleman opposite (Mr. Disraeli), to the effect, that the British Government was about to conclude a peace, when it was checked by the refusal of the Emperor of the French to concur—I say, it stands recorded before the world, by the declaration of the French Government, that it was the anterior decision of the British Government to reject the proposal of my noble friend, the member for the City of London, which had naturally influenced the Emperor in his decision. Here then, I say, is another proof of a heavy and peculiar responsibility resting upon the Government.

Nor, Sir, is even this all, though it is much; for, when the House of Commons was invited by the publication of the Protocols to give its opinion on the negotiations, we were not put in possession of all the facts; but the Government of this country placed us in a peculiar and disadvantageous position. I think it will not be disputed that, when at the end of May and the beginning of June we debated the question of the war, it was not only upon imperfect, but even upon garbled, information with reference to the most important points at issue. I myself, standing in this very place, and many other members of this House in different parts of it, argued upon the case as likely to occur, that, if the negotiations should be broken off, they would at any rate be broken off by the Western Powers, with Austria upon their side; and, further, that there was no alternative presented to our choice, as the means of escaping from the war, but one or the other of the two proposals of Russia. And now at length it appeared, that with regard to both of these fundamental propositions, we were entirely mistaken; and although the information that would have undeceived us was then in the possession of the Government, we were called upon to vote a solemn declaration—not, indeed, in the shape of an address to the Crown, but yet a deliberate announcement at the least—of our intention to support the Crown in the prosecution of the war, we being entirely in the dark, or rather being wholly misinformed and misled, as to the terms upon which peace might then have been obtained, and as to the parties by whom those terms were proposed and supported. All these things point to the same conclusion, namely, that an extraordinary responsibility rests on the heads of her Majesty’s advisers; and that, if they have been right in the decision at which they have arrived, and to which they have been the chief and peculiar means of bringing Europe,

then they are entitled to claim the exclusive fame and glory of that decision; but, if they have been wrong, they are as highly and peculiarly responsible: and they cannot plead the French alliance, and the fear of offending France, as an excuse; for the French have already, with great judgment and sagacity, put on record that what they did was done for fear of offending us; so that they leave the burden resting upon the advisers of the Crown. But, if there be this peculiar responsibility upon the heads of the Government, then, as they are responsible to the House of Commons, it is upon us, the members of the House of Commons, that it must ultimately fall. And now, Sir, I may observe, that great praise has been given to my noble friend, the Foreign Secretary, on account of the despatches on the Eastern question which have recently been presented to Parliament: this, we are told, is the tone required by the honour of the country. My right honourable friend who preceded me in the debate even thought it worth while to quote the expressions of approbation of their spirit and energy which have fallen from members of this House, in proof that the policy of the Government has been approved by the House of Commons and the country. I accord most freely to Lord Clarendon, as the representative of the Government, all the praise with regard to those despatches that can belong to the highest degree of ingenuity, of force of fact, and of temper; it is impossible for the ability of the advocate to contribute more effectually to the success of his cause; but I lack in those despatches what I confess I wished to find. I lack the true tokens of such a desire for peace as its inestimable value should inspire; I lack in them the spirit in which I do not hesitate to say the noble lord, the member for London, would have written; and I find in them, on the other hand, a proneness to raise every possible objection against pacific proposals—to anticipate, and by anticipation to stop the way against, every reasonable hope of a settlement—to place facts and opinions in such an order, and to handle them in such a manner, as, if possible, to show a case for the carrying on of the war. In speaking thus of the tone of the papers, I do not, of course, suppose that my noble friend would not be the first to embrace the hope of an honourable peace, if he could satisfy himself upon the terms; but I speak of the attitude into which his mind has unconsciously and not unnaturally been thrown.

Now, let us come to the facts before us; and, in examining them, there are two points to be kept in view. In the first place, would the objects of the war have been sufficiently accomplished by the acceptance of any of the proposals of peace which have been at our command? In the second place, even if those objects would not have been achieved in the degree which we think desirable, have we, notwithstanding, good reason to believe that it would have been wiser to take the comprehensive view which was taken by my noble friend, the member for London, at Vienna; and, bearing in mind the importance of maintaining the great combination with which we have been acting, to come to an accommodation? As respects the means offered you for securing the objects of the war, you have had an extraordinarily copious collection of alternatives before you. Those objects were defined by what are well known as the four points or bases; but it is unnecessary to detain the House with the consideration of the first, second, or fourth of the points, or with the first portion of the third; because the first and second, with the first part of the third, were settled at Vienna;



while no obstacle was offered, or expected to arise, on the part of Russia, to the settlement of the fourth. Well then, Sir, you have had no less than seven different plans for what is termed the solution of the second part of the third point. The first was the plan of neutralisation referred to by my right honourable friend, which never saw the light, but remains in the limbo of things that have but half existed; because, at a preliminary meeting of the Plenipotentiaries of the Allies in April last, it was agreed that unless Austria joined in supporting it, which she proved to be unwilling to do, it should never be proposed. Then came the plan of my noble friend, which was sent home by him on April 16. That plan consisted partly of territorial provisions relating to the territory both east and west of the Black Sea, and partly of provisions as to the actual force to be maintained in the waters of the Black Sea, founded on the principle, not of limitation, but of counterpoise. I do not seek to make use of it as an *argumentum ad hominem*—and I know the noble lord attaches much value to the territorial stipulations—but so far as the waters of the Euxine are concerned, the plan is identical in principle with the second Russian proposal. However, I will not dwell upon that plan, for, like the first, it never became the subject of practical discussion. Then we had the plan of the Allies—a strict and definite limitation, which was proposed and supported by them, and rejected by Russia. Then came the two plans of the Russian Government—the first founded on the basis of open straits, with a power, in certain cases, of closing them; the second founded on the basis of closed straits, with a discretionary power of opening them, whenever Turkey might think her security menaced. I still, after all that has been said and done, cannot think that the second of these two plans of Russia, although it was Russian—or rather because it was Russian—offered a bad basis on which to proceed. It seems to me that it would have been wiser, taking that proposition as the starting point of your arrangement, to introduce into it the improvements of which it was susceptible, than to reject it as it was rejected. Those five plans, however, are entirely gone by; but they—or, indeed, three or four at most from among them—were the only plans of which the House had any knowledge at the time of our former discussions on this great question. Since that period, there have come to light the two plans which may be called the Austrian plans, although, if I follow my right honourable friend in giving them that name, it must not be used *ad invidiam*. The first of them proceeded on the principle of counterpoise, and the second on the principle of limitation together with counterpoise. They were not, however, original conceptions of Austria, but were partly founded on actual suggestions from, and in other points had the approval of, the representatives of England and France. What, then, were these two plans, upon which the justification of my honourable friend, the member for Wick, in raising the present debate must rest? The first proposal, that of the 18th of April, was founded on these two bases—first, that there should be a guarantee of the territory of Turkey by all the Powers; next, that, in case Russia should at any time increase her fleet in the Black Sea beyond the strength it had attained in 1853, such increase should constitute a *casus belli* on the part of all the Allies. Now, my right honourable friend almost entirely confined his speech to that proposal, in a great degree overlooking the fact that another proposal was subsequently made by Austria, entirely different in character, which was only brought to the knowledge of the Conference at its last meeting, on the 4th of June.

The latter proposal was to this effect:—that the original parties to the quarrel, Russia and Turkey, should in the first instance agree between themselves, and should subsequently propose to the Conference, the amount of force which they were each to maintain in the Black Sea. *Prima facie*, this proposal was founded on the principle of limitation; and it is obvious to remark, that if that principle be as valuable as on our side has been contended, we thus had the means given us of obtaining the recognition of it. But long before the proposition was actually made, her Majesty's Government had anticipated it, and had barred its adoption by the most hostile comments. They had said as early as on the 24th of April, by the pen of Lord Clarendon, that the plan of settlement by collateral agreement, suggested by the French Plenipotentiary, would not do; that they knew what it meant when embodied in a treaty, because in a similar case—and they instanced the treaty of Vienna—Russia, supported by the Northern Powers, had held that an incorporation of that kind amounted to only registration. In consequence, I suppose, of this argument—at least no other ground is alleged—we refused even to take into consideration the second Austrian proposal at the Conference of the 4th of June, and chose rather to put an end to the negotiations. Now, what is the responsibility we have incurred with respect to these two proposals? The first proposal, founded on the principle of counterpoise, was made with the authority of all the Plenipotentiaries at Vienna; with the authority of the noble lord the member for London; with the authority of the French Plenipotentiary, who attested the sincerity of his convictions by resigning his office; and, if my noble friend did not take a similar step, it was because he thought—rightly or wrongly—that high political exigencies demanded from him the sacrifice of the views he had so strongly entertained and urged; further, the Turkish Plenipotentiary had given that proposal a favourable reception; and it had become at that time the proposition of Austria itself. Now, Sir, I venture to say, without fear of contradiction, that, long as this war may last (and doubtless it may last long), you never will overcome the significance and importance of this fact—that all the Plenipotentiaries of all the Powers (Turkey included) assembled at Vienna, the Austrian, French, and English Plenipotentiaries being likewise either chief Ministers or high Ministers of their respective Sovereigns, with one mind and one consent urged that proposal upon their own Governments respectively. You will never get over the weight and moment of that fact; and it is vain for you after this to think of regaining the opinion of Europe. That opinion cannot be upon your side, in defiance of such a weight of evidence, of a kind so palpable in its nature to the general apprehension, as that one fact brings to bear upon the reasonableness and righteousness of the proceedings of the respective parties at Vienna. I say then, Sir, without a moment's doubt, that even the first proposal should have been accepted; but, turning to the second, I confess that I have been astounded upon discovering how cavalierly it was dealt with. This second proposal offered you the alternative of limitation, and of limitation together with counterpoise; because it did not stop with providing that the Powers should themselves propose an arrangement as to their respective naval forces that should become an integral part of the treaty, but it likewise gave Turkey the right to open the Straits in case of danger. And, although I do not think the terms in which this power was reserved to Turkey were quite

satisfactory or large enough, yet, taken in connection with the comment of Count Buol, I find it was, beyond all doubt, intended that they should be made effective, so as to enable the Porte to call in the aid of its Allies whenever it deemed its security to be menaced. And why, Sir, do I say that this proposal was entitled to a formal consideration in the Conferences? Upon this account—that it had already been declared by the Plenipotentiaries themselves to be preferable to the other proposal, to which other proposal they had formerly given their assent. If you refer to page 11 of papers No. 15, you will see that at a meeting of the Plenipotentiaries on the 17th of April, it was determined that this course should be adopted in the Conferences; that they should propose to Russia, first of all, the strict limitation desired by England and France; next, the plan which sometime afterwards became the second Austrian proposal; and, lastly, the plan which very shortly afterwards became the first Austrian proposal. Now these plans were at that time arranged in the order in which they were considered to stand upon their respective merits; and, therefore, the proposition of counterpoise and limitation received the sanction of the four Plenipotentiaries, even in a higher degree than the project of counterpoise alone. Yet that plan, when brought before her Majesty's Government, nay, even before it was regularly submitted to them, was summarily rejected; and the members of the Conference, when they met on the 4th of June, were not even allowed to discuss it.

And now let me advert for a moment to the argument that you cannot trust to a limitation which is effected by a collateral agreement. Why cannot you trust to such a limitation? Because, you say, there were certain engagements of this class collaterally introduced into the treaty of Vienna, of which Russia, with the other Northern Powers, considered the insertion in the treaty as only having the effect of a record or registration. Well, what could be easier than for us to provide that the incorporation of such an instrument should not be a mere registration, but should render it, as, indeed, the Austrian proposal in distinct words declared, an integral part of the treaty? First of all, then, we have rejected the opportunity of making peace upon the first Austrian proposal, because we thought the difference between counterpoise and limitation so great that, while we might accept limitation, we could not accept counterpoise; and next, when we had the offer of counterpoise and limitation combined before us, the limitation, however, being reduced to a form that saved the honour of Russia, without of necessity raising any difficulty on our side as to its mere degree, we absolutely refused that proposal. Therefore I say that my right honourable friend is entirely wrong, and that his speech will altogether mislead the House if it induces it to infer that—wretched as I should consider such a plea by way of justification of the war—the object for which this contest is prolonged is the maintenance, with reference to the forces of Russia in the Euxine, of limitation as against counterpoise.

Again, Sir, in another point, and another point too which I hold to be of capital importance, my right honourable friend's narrative absolutely demands explanation, because he gives us to understand that we could in no case have secured the military aid of Austria. I am sorry to say, the great confusion in which the history of these transactions is presented to us—it may be from the fault of nobody, but probably from the necessity of the case, owing to



the number of the parties concerned, and the way in which the communications have been carried on in different places at the same time—has obviously quite bewildered and deceived even my right honourable friend; for I can show you that Austria did give you an absolute pledge, in a certain event which it was placed within your power to bring about, that she would go to war. I here state that boldly and broadly, and I challenge contradiction, of which I know perfectly well the case does not admit. The facts were these:—Austria made two proposals. The first of them having been rejected by the British Government at the commencement, namely, of the month of May, the question of Austria's going to war in regard to it never could arise, because that result was made to depend on refusals by Russia only. Austria then brought forward another proposal in the Conference, after her first one had been rejected by the Western Powers; and my right honourable friend leaves it to be supposed that, when she made that second proposal, she distinctly intimated that she would not go to war if Russia refused to accept it. That is the case of my right honourable friend; and it is the truth, but not the whole truth. I admit it; she made the first proposal in April, and the case of her going to war did not arise. She made, that is, she made formally and finally, her second proposal in June, and she said she would not go to war if Russia refused it. But this is not all; my right honourable friend has omitted from his view that upon which the whole merit of the question turns, and that which is now proved beyond the possibility of doubt—viz., that in the interval between these two proceedings a communication came from Austria which involved a junction of the two proposals, upon the collective rejection of which she was prepared to go to war. Austria did not offer to go to war for either proposal singly, but she said this:—"Let us propose to Russia these two plans jointly, and if she rejects them both we will then draw the sword." ("Hear, hear," from Lord John Russell.) My right honourable friend indeed made a faint allusion to this part of the Austrian communications, and said it was made after the decision had been taken by her Majesty's Government. After what decision? Why, after the decision to reject the first Austrian proposal, but before the Conference at which the second proposal of the same Power was rejected. Before that Conference, and therefore, while everything was still open, her Majesty's Government received from Austria the communication from which I shall read a very brief extract; and, with this document in their hands, they sent fresh orders to the Conference, or allowed orders previously sent to operate there, which absolutely closed the door against a settlement. The passage which I shall quote has already been referred to by my honourable friend (Mr. Laing); but, as it is of such deep importance in this controversy, and as the matter has really been so much obscured by the inadequate and misleading statement of details which has been made by my right honourable friend—himself, as I have shown, misled—I may be forgiven if I read a few lines from it to the House. The words in question are contained in a letter from Count Buol to Count Colloredo. My right honourable friend said something about the want of direct communication with our Government on the part of Austria. I trust that he does not intend to take his ground upon that distinction. The distinction between limitation and counterpoise is, I think, narrow enough as a ground for war. I hope we shall not add to it some other distinction between a direct com-

munication from Austria, and a communication through Count Colloredo, the Minister of Austria. This letter, which I shall now quote, was addressed by Count Buol to Count Colloredo, and was communicated by the latter directly to Lord Clarendon. In his hands it was left on the part of the Austrian Government; whose entire authority it therefore carried, and upon whom its contents were thus absolutely binding. The words are these:—

“As to the third principle, we have proposed to our allies, at the same time binding ourselves, in case of need, to support it by force of arms, a solution which it is our firm conviction would be effectual, complete, and agreeable to European interests.”

Something has been said about these words referring to a *casus belli* occurring hereafter, if Russia increased her fleet beyond her strength in 1853. The paragraph which follows entirely disposes of such a construction, for it at least indisputably applies, not to any contingency to arise hereafter, but to an immediate participation in the war now raging:—

“If Russia, being placed in a position to agree to one or other of these proposals of the *ultimatum*, had rejected both of them, we should then have had proof that she will decidedly not give her assistance to the complete realisation of the third guarantee, in so far as its object is to put an end to Russian preponderance in the Black Sea. It being impossible, therefore, to do else than consider as exhausted the means of conciliation for bringing about such a peace as the interests of Europe, and ours in particular, require, the Emperor, our august master, decided to have recourse to arms as a means of obtaining this peace.”

MR. WILKINSON: What is the date of that document?

MR. GLADSTONE: It is dated Vienna, May 20. We do not know the precise date at which it was communicated to Lord Clarendon, but it is clear it must have been before the 2nd of June, for on that day Lord Clarendon writes to Lord Westmoreland on the subject of it; and it was not till the 4th of that month that the second proposal itself was formally submitted to the Conference, and the door closed upon negotiation by the direction of the Government of England, acting, I presume, in conjunction with that of France. Therefore, having the promise of Austria to make a double proposal to Russia, involving two alternatives—the one counterpoise alone, and the other counterpoise, with limitation by collateral agreement; and having also her promise to go to war in the event of the rejection of both proposals—the Government refused to agree to that suggestion of Austria, and determined in preference on the continuation of the war; and, while I am speaking, my right honourable friend (Sir J. Graham) reminds me that this very idea of proposing a plurality of plans to Russia, and making the alternative of war to depend on the rejection of the whole—an idea evidently conceived in a pacific spirit—owes its origin, so far as we are aware, to the noble lord the member for London, who closed his letter on the 18th of April with words to this effect: that, if her Majesty's Government decided on accepting any one of the three proposals made at the Conference, he thought they ought to insist upon Austria making the rejection of all three by Russia a *casus belli*. So much then, Sir, for the plans of accommodation which we have refused; and I must confess that I can hardly express my feelings when I consider that we are making war, and that, too, a gigantic war, on account of such paltry differences as those which can alone be even colourably alleged between what was proposed to us and what we had ourselves proposed.

No doubt, there is in this country a strong war party, and a strong feeling in favour of the prosecution of the war; but neither the party nor the feeling is that to which my right honourable friend, the Secretary of State, belongs. There are persons entertaining more extended views; they have feelings of far greater exasperation, requiring much more to allay them: they look to European changes; they look to revolutionary struggles; they look to effecting what they consider to be progress—and true progress, by pacific means, we all desire to see accomplished; they look to effecting progress, in the sense of their opinions, by means of the sword. Others, without proceeding to such lengths, have vague, and, as I think, somewhat visionary, views of humbling our enemy; but there are, I may venture to say, none that look for limitation instead of counterpoise, or that consider such a difficulty as that (which difficulty, however, we are no longer entitled to say exists) in the arrangement of terms of peace to constitute a justification for the continuance of the war. I recollect, indeed, that my honourable friend, the member for Kidderminster (Mr. Lowe), has expressed a good opinion of limitation; he has even made a motion in this House upon it. Does he recollect the fate of that motion? How many persons adopted that doctrine of limitation—a limitation which was to be the hinge of peace and war? I doubt whether the Government would find, upon a vote, ten adherents in this House to the particular view which they have adopted; and yet it is for that view that we are at war. But my right honourable friend says, and says truly, limitation was a proposal which we, who belonged to the Cabinet in February, were bound to make to Russia; we had agreed to it, as a proposal to be made, as a condition we were desirous to obtain; but we had not agreed to it as an ultimatum; we had not agreed to make—and it appears to-night that my right honourable friend will not now bind himself to make—this condition of limitation the hinge of peace or war.

I must, however, Sir, press it upon the House, that, if we confine ourselves to considering the details of these proceedings, however clear and however strong our views and convictions may be, we do injustice to them. There is a deeper question at issue than the particular conditions offered and refused, or than the difference between those particular conditions. How are the aggressive tendencies of Russia to be effectually restrained? What is the war into which we have plunged? It is a war in defence of Turkey. How is Turkey to be effectually defended? Sir, in my opinion, having obtained the great and essential objects—the abolition of Russian rights over the Principalities, and the destruction of Russian claims upon the Greek Christians of the Ottoman empire—I do not hesitate to say, the best plan will be, not that which looks best upon paper—not even that which in the abstract may have the best claims to our approval—but that which will command the united support of Europe. It is to the support of Europe that we must look, if we are to think of restraining Russia. Great as is the power of England and France, I defy you for any length of time to fight effectually against the fixed law of Nature and course of events. You cannot, by the efforts of the two Western Powers, control the paramount laws which must determine from age to age the destinies of Russia. You may, by gigantic and unheard-of efforts, succeed for a moment—I grant that, although, when I consider all that it involves, I cannot regard even that as free from doubt—in effecting your purpose; but your success will be bought at a fearful price, and it will be the success of a moment only. It



is impossible to contemplate as a normal state of things that union and identification of the whole West, which is the first condition of such success; but, even if that could be relied on, the thing itself is impossible to be done. As Mr. Burke said, when discussing the chimerical proposition of representation for the American colonies, "You have the ocean with its 3000 miles against you;" *opposuit natura*; so now we have, if not the Great Atlantic, yet the ocean with 3000 miles of sea against us. There is but one way of maintaining permanently what I may presume to call the great international policy and law of Europe—but one way of keeping within bounds any one of the Powers possessed of such strength as France, England, or Russia, if it be bent on an aggressive policy, and that is, by maintaining not so much great fleets, or other demonstrations of physical force, which I believe to be really an insignificant part of the case, but the moral union—the effective concord of Europe. Now, what course has been pursued here? We are told that Russia is a power from whom we are not to expect the observance of treaties; you cannot trust to her good faith. We are not told that from an unauthoritative source; but her Majesty's Government, on a former night, put up their Attorney-General, who expended his unsurpassed ingenuity in a detailed demonstration, amidst the cheers of this House, that it is impossible to bind Russia by treaties. Now, Sir, I am not about to claim any peculiar sanctity or purity for the policy of Russia—I am not ready to assert that for our own policy—especially I am not prepared to claim it for our policy such as it has too commonly been in the East—still less, or at any rate quite as little, am I prepared to assert it for Russia. I am ready—if this really be the opinion of her Majesty's Government, that the observance of plighted faith is not to be expected from Russia—to accept that doctrine. I have myself recently heard that there is at St. Petersburg a considerable party of persons who hold language such as this: "What folly in our Government not to have accepted the terms offered by the Allies; they should have acceded to any plan; peace would have been made, the vicissitudes of politics would shortly have separated England and France, and then we could have set at nought the stipulations of the treaty." I am told that there is a party which holds that doctrine; but, on the other hand, I am also told that there are people in Russia, as in other countries, who look upon that doctrine as the height of villany, and who desire that no peace should be made which involves dishonour to their country. I am about to show, however, the glaring contrariety of the courses pursued by the Government, with the arguments they employ. They say, through the Attorney General, "We cannot trust Russia in regard to the observance of any terms;" but, if we cannot trust her, what is the alternative? What should we do? Why, we ought certainly not to rely on wretched stipulations, which we ourselves declare to be worthless for the purpose of binding her, but rely on the maintenance of that union—that combination of the moral and the material strength of Europe—which you found available for the purpose two years ago, and which, but for your own acts, might be available to you hereafter. If you cannot trust to treaties, trust to something independent of and more trustworthy than treaties; trust to the enlightened sense of the general interest in the peace of Europe; for it is by that union and that common sentiment alone that Russia, or that any Power of the first order, can be permanently coerced. But, no; the Government have indeed declared treaties

to be worthless; and yet, for the sake of a stipulation in a treaty which nobody outside the Cabinet thinks worth anything, which even the Secretary of State tells us is not a *sine quâ non*, and which the Attorney-General proves to us Russia will not observe—yet, for the sake of it, they will dissolve the combination of Europe; they will break the last link which unites us to Germany; they will reduce us to a state of comparative isolation; they will turn the favourable current of European opinion; and, madly pressing on the conflict, which they are now doing all in their power to render desperate, they reject the golden opportunity which the mercy of Providence has placed in our way to enable us to restore peace to Europe.

Now, Sir, with respect to the great Powers of Austria and Russia, I confess I am not among those who are apt to sympathise with Russian or Austrian views on the mode of managing the domestic affairs of the States of Europe. I have but little name in the Courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg, but that little is, I fear, a bad one; for I am not supposed to admire the policy which those powers, if they do not practise it themselves, have been, I think, too apt to countenance and support in other quarters. But that is not the question now before us. We have now to consider what our position relatively to Austria was and is. What was it? It has been idly said that we reaped no advantage from the Austrian alliance. I reply, we had various and great advantages. Austria neutralised the action of 300,000 Russian troops, of whom the first fruits are now finding their way to the plains of the Crimea, and who will soon be, if they are not already, among the ranks of our adversaries. Again, as long as we had the Austrian alliance, her occupation of the Principalities had quite a different character to that which it now bears. I cannot regard that or any foreign occupation as being in itself otherwise than a serious evil. I have often been astonished, during the course of this controversy, when the occupation of the Principalities—first by Russia, and then by Austria—has been discussed, month after month, day after day, entirely as a question of the payment of some £40,000 a year to Turkey, or as a violation of her rights as suzerain of the country; but never in reference to the happiness, the well-being, the freedom, or the peace of the millions of inhabitants of those Principalities. The occupation of the Principalities by Austria was, however, useful for the primary purposes of the war. You endured it because she formed a barrier against Russia in that quarter. I do not know now against whom she forms a barrier, or whether she will hereafter practically occupy the Principalities more for us than against us. Well, Sir, these things have changed in regard to Austria, and I must say I look on the change that has been brought about as most serious with regard to the occupation of the Principalities. I think it still more serious in another point of view. After the feeble policy of Prussia, it was on the support of Austria alone you could rely to keep up anything like an European combination—that character which entitled us to use the lofty language Lord Clarendon, not unbecomingly employed in the autumn, when he declined to dispute the case with Russia, as between parties standing in the view of the world on a level with each other. He said, and he was entitled to say, that Europe had pronounced on the respective positions of the parties. I am doubtful whether he can now renew that lofty claim to represent Europe in the quarrel, or to act under her sanction; and I am afraid that we shall not find the change in our relative positions stop there. I think, after the

refusal which Austria has received from us to her proposals, and after she has been told, as I see it stated is the case, that the Russian Government was ready to accept her most recent proposition, we must look to a gradual widening of the interval which now separates us from that power; and it is not a little remarkable, if the common sources of information may be trusted, that, following immediately upon the diplomatic rupture, we find Austria first stripping her Polish and Russian frontier of troops, and diminishing her army on that side the Alps, while at the same moment we hear that she is strengthening her garrisons in Italy. These are, indeed, circumstances full of meaning; and they are circumstances of which we begin to feel the magnitude and the weight, when we recollect all the special pleading we have bestowed on the differences between counterpoise and limitation.

However, Sir, it is quite true that we still retain certain allies. First of all, Turkey is our ally. Is that ally really an addition of strength? I have been reproached for having used at a former time disparaging language in respect to Turkey. If my object had been to disparage Turkey, I could have said much more, and could have referred to the history of former periods, and to the part which the Turkish race had played, and the relations it had borne to Christendom. But my object was very different: it was the simple fulfilment of what I thought an imperative duty. Seeing that we were coming nearer and nearer to the likelihood of war, I was desirous, in the little I ever said on this subject, that that little should tend not to blind, but to open the eyes of, the people of England, and to give them to understand what calculations it was reasonable they should make, and what reliance they could justly place on the strength and resources of Turkey to aid them in the war. It appears to me that our alliance with Turkey may be one of a similar character to that mentioned in ancient story, of the land that the Ottoman power now rules. When Æneas escaped from the flames of Troy, he had an ally. That ally was his father, Anchises; and the part which Æneas performed in the alliance was to carry his ally upon his back. He addressed his parent in these appropriate words—

“ Ergo age, care pater, cervici imponere nostræ;  
Ipse subibo humeris, nec me labor iste gravabit.”

I commend these words, and the meaning of these words, to her Majesty's Government, and especially to my right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for he is the particular Minister to whom, I think, will belong the duty and honour which these words may imply. And, Sir, if unhappily this result shall ensue, it will be from no want of honesty on the part of Turkey, but from the fact that her Mahomedan institutions are decrepit; that the youthful and vigorous elements of European Turkey are underneath, and that the antiquated and worn-out elements of society there are situated above those which are intrinsically more fit to rule. And is it not the fact that she wants, in a great degree, the ordinary organization and machinery of government? Is it not the fact that, in order to raise her revenues in ordinary times, Turkey has to trust, in a great degree, in many of her provinces, to the agency of military force, which, of course, is now concentrated and absorbed in the camps which she has formed for the purposes of the war against Russia? Her revenues, therefore, cannot be fully raised; and the habit of not paying taxes, I need hardly say, is both one



which forms itself with great facility (a laugh), and one which, when once formed, is extremely difficult to uproot. But, with regard to our ally, Turkey, I am bound to say, that in my belief the greatest of all the manifold dangers of this war is, that the prolongation of it must bring about the very evils which we undertook the war in order to avert. There is no plan that the Emperor of Russia could have devised, so sure and effectual for his purpose of exhausting Turkey, and leaving her an easy prey for the first convenient opportunity, as the plan which, though you have not devised it, you are now, it would seem, prepared to act upon, namely, that of an indefinite prolongation of the war, without objects either clear or adequate. Every month, every week, and every day for which you continue the war, makes more intense, more obvious, and less capable of remedy, the decrepitude and exhaustion of Turkey. I am not now about to discuss afresh the merits of the Turkish loan; but I protest on my own behalf, and I am certain I may add on behalf of my right honourable friends near me, that the reasons which led us to go the length of recording our votes in opposition to it were not pecuniary and financial, but were strictly political reasons; had references to the very alliances you sought to promote; and, above all, to our anxiety lest we should forfeit the attainment of the objects of this war. The very principle of guaranteeing money to Turkey is fatal, inasmuch as it creates in her a state of political dependence. You have gone to war to secure the integrity and independence of the Turkish empire, and then, in order forsooth to prosecute the war, you induce Parliament to pass a measure which will leave Turkey in the position of a slave. If we want a fair test of the political effects of this guarantee, let us ask ourselves what we should have thought if the arrangements we have just made had, under different circumstances, been concluded between Russia and Turkey—if Russia had been guaranteeing to Turkey, with many kind words, a loan of £5,000,000. I venture to say that such an arrangement, and its accompanying mortgages, would have furnished ground for a fifth point at Vienna; and we should have declared it to be totally inconsistent with the independence of Turkey, under her peculiar circumstances, that her loans should be raised under the guarantee of a great European Power.

So much for Turkey; and now with respect to Sardinia. I, for one, have the highest opinion of the honour and intelligence of that country, and of its Government. Though the pressure on her finances is severe, she has gallantly borne up against it, and she has made every financial exertion becoming a nation in the highest state of civilisation. She has maintained a just balance, though with difficulty, between her revenue and her expenditure; but it is impossible to suppose that she can contribute in any sensible proportion to such gigantic burdens as this war will entail. Moreover, I must confess I begin to feel some compunction with respect to Sardinia. The invitation we gave to her to join us might be right or wrong; but it was *bonâ fide* presented by us under the belief that she was to be one in an European combination, representing the united sentiment of Europe; and now, having got Sardinia into that combination, we immediately proceed to change its character, and render it no longer a comprehensive European combination, but an isolated alliance only of certain Powers among themselves. I confess, Sir, that I am not without apprehension that we may be found to have incurred a deep responsibility with respect to Sardinia, if, in carrying on this war beyond its original and proper

purposes, we make her an adjunct merely in promoting a French and English policy.

And now, further, with respect to France itself: is there any doubt of the tendency and leaning of the great and gallant people of France in reference to this war? I believe the French people did originally appreciate the objects of the war, and were ready to make all reasonable sacrifices for those objects; but I protest utterly against the construction put by some writers on the great operations we have seen recently taking place in reference to the loans which have been raised in France for the purposes of the war. In my opinion, nothing is more groundless than to connect the avidity with which great sums have been subscribed with any general enthusiasm, or with any enthusiasm whatever, for the pursuit of this war. If you ask for an explanation of the facts, I am quite sure that any gentleman connected with the city of London could at once afford it. The phenomenon is of the very simplest and most ordinary kind. The rate of interest offered by the French Government, and the terms of subscription were so high, and so peculiarly favourable for all persons having money to invest, that this investment competed advantageously with every other kind of investment. But let us look to the other side of the question, and consider the position of the debtor—that is to say, of the State and people of France. Hardly any one with whom I have had the opportunity of speaking appears to have realised what has taken place. In sixteen short months of war, France has added to her public debt, speaking in round numbers, 100,000,000 of pounds sterling. She has offered to the creditor very nearly five per cent. interest—in sheer interest—besides an immense bonus, which, on the return of peace, he will obtain by the improvement of the capital value of his stock. It is pretty obvious that the French people are not likely to go on adding £100,000,000 to their public debt once in every sixteen months, either for the objects of a remote and purely general policy, or for any such differences (did they still exist) as the difference between counterpoise and limitation. If you want to be intelligible to the masses in France, you must use other language—language such as associates itself with the former glories and military traditions of the country. Depend on it, there is danger and apprehension in that quarter connected with the prosecution of your present policy; and those who are wise and earnest in a desire to promote the French alliance, not as an occasional, but as a stable and permanent, connection, will be of opinion that it would be best promoted by the acceptance of such terms as those to which I have referred.

Again, Sir, it is said that the great efforts which are now being made by Russia must be intolerable to her; but, for one, I am not prepared to rely on the broken reed of mere speculation in this country as to the probable financial exhaustion of Russia. The noble lord at the head of the Government told us on a recent occasion that the expenses of Russia in this war amounted to £30,000,000 per annum. I do not know what means my noble friend possessed of forming a judgment on that point. It is not easy to understand how Russia can spend an excess of thirty millions sterling over her peace establishment upon her armies only, and within her own territory; but even if she does spend thirty millions to match the hundred millions spent by the Powers allied against her, I will not venture to rely on that. I must, indeed, admit that at the present time I find it

difficult to obtain information with respect to Russia. I believed, until within the last few months, that we had a press in this country free, not only legally but morally, and long habituated fearlessly to discuss everything, and to trust to the strength of truth and right to give the victory; but I do not now know where to look in the English papers for Russian documents, such as Count Nesselrode's note, of the 4th of June, to the Austrian Government, communicating (as it seems) satisfaction at the Austrian occupation of the Principalities, and readiness to respect it. I believe that document has not been published in any English newspapers. But do not let us build upon any such precarious and uninformed calculations with respect to Russia. As far as known facts go, we have no right to reckon upon Russian exhaustion. There are certain tests which are partial, but are sound and trustworthy as far as they go; look to the state of the exchanges—are they vitally affected? Is the price of commodities imported from abroad materially raised? or is the price received for exports at the place of exportation greatly reduced? Of course I do not refer to corn, because I have no doubt that in many parts of Russia the price of corn must have been immensely reduced; but when we are speaking of Russia with reference to the influences which bear upon her policy, we ought not to speak so much of that vast space which is covered by the territorial designation, as of those portions to which St. Petersburg and Moscow form the central points. Those are the parts which are principally to be regarded as affecting the policy of the Russian Government. I say, then, that you are not in a condition with safety and prudence to speculate upon the exhaustion of Russia as likely to overbear her presumed wishes and resolutions in reference to the prosecution of this war. Then, with respect to the spirit and feeling of the Russian people and of the Russian army. I do not speak now of the Russian Government. In the mouths of the Russian Government it may be that the phrases of patriotism and religion are mere cant phrases; but they are not, therefore, of necessity such in the mouths of the Russian people, or even of the Russian army. Let any honourable gentleman put himself in the place of the Russian soldier, and act upon that rule, so salutary in all controversies whatever, of endeavouring to take a survey of the case from the adversary's point of view. Against whom is he fighting? Against the Turks—against the hereditary enemies of his race—against those whom he is taught to consider the hereditary enemies of his religion—and, finally, and as respects all the Allies, against the invaders of his soil. If there are two motives which can act with overpowering might upon the human heart—if there are two incentives which can draw forth out of a man all the power and energy of which he is possessed, are they not these—first, that he is fighting against the enemy of his religion; and, secondly, that he is defending his own soil; and are not these the very motives which the Russian soldiery and people have at present to work upon them? Let me here relate to the House an anecdote which has lately reached me—I think, on good authority. It illustrates the spirit which the Russian Government is enabled to infuse into its army, and it illustrates also, on the other side, with tremendous force, all that we have been told of the losses which have been sustained by the Russian army in this war. The House will at once see, from its impartial bearings, that this is not a concocted anecdote, but that it bears upon it the internal evidences of veracity. A corps of 40,000 men (I can-



not name the corps) arrived at Perekop on their way to the Russian camp in the Crimea; the case was urgent, and the men were desired to march onwards to their destination at the rate of thirty versts a day—which the House will see is a forced march, somewhat under twenty miles a day. The men said, “Do not impose upon us any fixed distance; let us march as far as we can.” They reached the Russian camp—a distance of 120 miles—in the course of four days, but they lost on the way 10,000 men. They left Perekop 40,000 strong; only 30,000 men reached the camp. This tends to confirm, you will justly say, all we have been told of the enormous numbers which have perished in the Russian army during this war; and you will tell me that it is impossible for any country long to withstand such a drain; but is there not another aspect under which we ought also to regard this anecdote? What must be the spirit of that soldiery, what its power of passive endurance, its devotion to the will of the Emperor, and what the strength of its sentiments of patriotism and religion, when the zeal of the men outruns the orders of the commanders, and when they are ready to make efforts such as those, even though with reason to anticipate too surely that in the short space of four days, without a hand being lifted against them, one man out of every four will have fallen? I see that an honourable gentleman smiles; but I confess it appears to me that such a fact as this is full of meaning with reference to the more remote prospects of this war. Again, have you noticed what took place in Sebastopol on the 20th of June? This, I am glad to say, we know through the medium of our own papers. It is a Russian account, but it comes round to us through the *Ost-Deutsche Post*, and has been copied into some English journals.

“On the 20th, the burial of the dead was continued, but towards evening the flag of truce was removed, and the bombardment recommenced, but much more feebly than before. The same day a *Te Deum* was sung in the church of St. Vladimir in celebration of our happy success, and the soldiers who attended wore the same clothes which they had worn in the struggle, and not a single coat was to be seen there which was not dyed with blood. In the evening the whole garrison of Sebastopol received the Sacrament. Osten Sacken, with his staff, received it first, and the rest of the troops in succession.”

You may say that this is fanaticism, but at any rate it is not hypocrisy; or, even if I must suppose it to be hypocrisy in those who lead, it is not such in those who follow. It is a sign of that character, partly passive, but capable of being roused by circumstances to a high and persevering activity, which has enabled Russia to occupy so prominent a position in the affairs of the world, which will never, I am convinced, enable her to become formidable to you so long as your cause is just, but which it must be worth your while to consider when you begin to doubt of its justice. So much for the position of Russia with regard to this war.

And now, Sir, before I sit down, I am bound to express my deep gratitude to the House for the patience with which it has heard me. When I reflect that my right honourable friends and myself, who were parties to the deliberate decision to enter into this war, at the very moment we come to a clear conviction that it ought no longer to be pursued, are allowed to express ourselves with entire freedom, and to utter the strongest sentiments against the policy we thus condemn, I must say I never knew a more conspicuous instance of the length to which freedom of speech is not only in theory but in practice given and exercised in this glorious country. We cannot, indeed, under such circumstances, follow the dictates of our con-

sciences without suspicion, without taunts, or without sneers. These things are to be expected; I do not for a moment murmur at them; and I fully admit that, if her Majesty's Government had accepted the proposals recommended by my noble friend, the member for London, they would have paid the forfeiture of place and power. They would have also paid a heavier forfeit; they would have been pelted by the storm of abuse, and they would have suffered under what is harder to bear—a storm of ridicule. We know something of what these things are, but they would have had to bear them all in a greater degree, in proportion to the greater importance of the service they would then have rendered to their country. I do not complain of these things; I admit that to a large portion of the community it must be irritating and exasperating to see those who were among the original counsellors of the war now endeavouring, and endeavouring strenuously, as I hope, to bring it to an end. I am doubly thankful, therefore, to this House for the free permission it has given me to express with earnestness, and even vehemence, all I feel on this important, nay absorbing, subject. The House will feel that, if we are wrong, our responsibility is strong indeed; but we have had no choice; with our convictions, we, above all, are bound to endeavour to draw the country forth from this great struggle on the earliest occasion, when we think it can be done with honour. I am not ashamed to say that I remain of my original opinion as to the justice of this war at its commencement. There are gentlemen who sit near me who think differently from me in that respect, and who, I believe, nay I hope—for the supposition I am making is only in harmony with the high spirit and principle they have shown, and the consistent part they have acted from the first—were ready to have censured us for entering into it. Between us and them, therefore, there can be no suspicion of conspiracy or combination. I differ from them in this:—I think we had cause to go into this war, while I admit the difficulties of the question. I think that it was not only a just and necessary war, with reference to its immediate occasion, but that probably, from deeply-seated causes of a more general character, it could not long have been avoided—that, in short, it had become absolutely necessary to cut the meshes of the net in which Russia had entangled Turkey. At the same time the war, into which I reluctantly but deliberately agreed to enter, was a war the objects of which I can define; they are to be found in the Four Points. It was a war carried on by an united people, in the name and on behalf of Europe, into which we entered, backed by a European combination, and by the authority of what I may presume almost to term European law. It was a war which we undertook, not only joined in actual operations with France, but with Austria and Prussia (backward though the latter has shown herself now for the last twelvemonth and more) linked in a treaty with us to resist Russia by force of their united arms, in case of certain events occurring, which were then well known to be both probable and near. That was the nature of the war into which we went, and it was perfectly obvious, from the nature of that war, that certain general rules were applicable to it, to which we ought to endeavour at least to conform. No doubt, the man who advises his Sovereign to go to war cannot possibly give security for an escape at any given time from the struggle which he begins; but the very nature of this war showed that, if possible, it ought to be short. Every war, the prose-

cution of which depends on alliances, ought to be a short war—that is, every effort should be used to make it short, and its objects should not be such as are certain to make it long. It was not a distrust of France, as my right honourable friend, the Home Secretary, would seem to think, which probably led my honourable friend near me (Mr. Laing) to anticipate danger to the French alliance from a continuance of the war. It was because it is the very nature of a war, when prolonged, from its vicissitudes, from the sacrifices it requires, from the collision of interests and feeling it entails, to endanger alliances; and every war, therefore, which is to be carried on by alliances, ought to be short, sharp, and decisive. I may be told that this has not been a short, sharp, and decisive war. My answer is, that our war was a war for the Four Points. You may condemn them, if you think fit. I am not now defending them; I am speaking of what is historical—not of my own opinion of what ought to have been, but of what, as indisputable and familiar records tell you, actually was. It was a war for certain objects, defined in what are called the four points or bases. Those objects have been, in our judgment, attained; and, they having been attained, they, although the Government, or the Parliament, or the country, whichever of them it may prove to have been, may not have chosen to avail themselves of the offers which have been made, is it inconsistency in us, with our views, to say that the war ought to be brought to a close? Would it not, on the contrary, have been the most contemptible effeminacy of character, if a man in my position, who feels that he has been instrumental in bringing his country into this struggle, were to hesitate a single moment when he was firmly and fully convinced in his own mind that the time had arrived when she might with honour pass forth from it? That was the war into which we entered; what the war is in which we are now engaged I do not profess to know. I have not the remotest idea, nor, as I believe, has any other person, what may be the policy of the Government. I hope they have a policy. When we began the war, we were called on to explain its objects; but the objects of the war, which is now being carried on are entirely unexplained. If I refer to the speech of my right honourable friend, I should draw one conclusion; if I turned to the speech of other members of the Government, I might draw other conclusions. What was the upshot of the speech of the Attorney-General? What the upshot of that of the right honourable gentleman the Secretary for Ireland? Something totally different from any admitted object of the war. Austria has recently declared, in the most solemn language, that, if ever she renews negotiations, it shall be for the purpose of giving effect to the four well-known guarantees. Austria uses these words:—

“We shall await, in a firm attitude, the progress of events and the propitious moment for renewing the negotiations for peace, to which, when that moment arrives, we shall on our part only agree with the irrevocable resolution of making them tend to the faithful, effectual, and complete realisation of the four guarantees.”

That is the declaration of Austria. The declaration of England, as found in the language of Lord Clarendon in answer to Lord Lyndhurst, is as follows:—

“On the other hand, we have announced—I am still answering the inquiry of my noble and learned friend—that, as the four bases were to be maintained in their entirety, and that, as the third basis has been rejected, and the responsibility



of breaking up the negotiations at Vienna does not rest upon us, but upon Russia, we consider ourselves entirely disengaged from those bases."

The effect of that disengagement is, that the House of Commons remains in a state of total ignorance as to the scope and object of this war. I have spoken of the wide scope and visionary objects of the war that some persons desire. I am bound to say, I do not believe that her Majesty's Government would be inclined, or, even if they were inclined, that they would venture knowingly, to plunge us into such a war as that; but I say that, so long as you continue a gigantic war of this kind for a small and inadequate, or for unexplained and indefinite, purposes, you run a risk, besides the other monstrous evils to which I have alluded, of having every moment new objects forced upon you—objects of which you now disapprove—objects which would entirely change the character of the war, but which you may hereafter have forced upon you, owing possibly to some mysterious circumstances, such as those to which we know that you ascribe your having once or twice already given way. Perhaps I shall be told, "What are we to do? Can we leave the siege of Sebastopol?" I fully admit that a little more than three months ago you had an opportunity which you are not likely to have again. If you do not avail yourselves of these golden opportunities when they come, you, who are not the masters of events, cannot command their recurrence. Your position now is far less favourable than it was then. As to the political attitude of the Powers of Europe, the deterioration is palpable. As to the course of the war, you are already considering what are to be the military operations of 1856. Three months have elapsed since that date; but those three months have, I fear, been, for military purposes, almost a year. You have achieved two military triumphs, but they seem to have been more barren of results than most of us—than I for one, certainly, as to the Sea of Azoff—had hoped. On the other hand, you have suffered, and for the first time in the course of this war, a serious military reverse. (Cries of "No, no.") Perhaps my language may be too strong. If I may be allowed to substitute other words which will equally answer my purpose, you have for the first time failed in an important military operation. ("No, no.") Well, I won't continue a controversy upon words; but I want to know whether honourable gentlemen have really asked themselves, what is the object for which we are contending? It is a miserable thing, instead of making war for justice, to be waiters upon success. But let that for a moment pass. Let us suppose that there is no possibility of failure, and that everything is to happen as you would have it. When you have got Sebastopol, what are you to do with it? Are you sure that the possession of it, as matters now stand, will either practically improve our own position, or practically damage the position of our adversary? I recollect one instance in which a great Minister of this country prolonged negotiations—deliberately prolonged them—with a view to the success of a military operation. It was the case in which Lord Chatham prolonged or postponed the negotiations which ultimately led to the peace of Paris, in order to render himself master of Belleisle. But his object was distinct; he wished to have Belleisle, in order that he might give it back in exchange for Minorca. In this case there is no such reason, no such plea. Now, we say that you ought to have receded three months ago from before Sebastopol, on the ground that you had obtained the political objects of the war; and

that, as the military operations are only a means for the attainment of the political objects, they should then have ceased. On the contrary, it seems, at least of late, to have been considered by every one out of the Cabinet, though it was so considered by no one in the Cabinet, that the capture of Sebastopol was the great object of the war—that it ought to be pursued at all costs—that it was an end in itself—a kind of principle of duty and honour to persevere, under all circumstances, with that most memorable siege. We protested against the doctrine, and protest against it still. I say that the doctrine, that you never ought to forego the accomplishment of a great military operation, when the practical objects have been attained, lest you should incur military odium, is both a novel and a retrogressive doctrine—a doctrine which will not carry you forward and onward to the furtherance of civilisation, but backward towards a state of savagery and barbarism. Such are the feelings and convictions I entertain. I thank the House again for the extraordinary indulgence with which they have heard me on this as on former occasions. It is the future only that can decide between us and those from whom we so widely differ. I hope, however, for the sake of mankind at large—for the sake at least of Christendom—that the time is near at hand which will bring to a definitive issue this great and momentous question. For the present, deeply grateful for the indulgence and freedom of speech which have been accorded me, I remain content, in the belief that in endeavouring to recall the Government from that course of policy which they are now pursuing, I am following the course which is most conformable to the obligations of a true patriot, a faithful representative of the people, and a loyal subject to the Queen.

















